THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) No Sir. The Government of India have approved the proposal of Experimental Crop Insurance Scheme (ECIS).

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Post-Harvest crop management

1090. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Post-harvest crop management including marketing is one of the weakest areas in the farm sector; and

(b) if so, the details of measures taken by Government to improve Post-harvest management facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) According to the Approach Paper to Ninth Five Year Plan, the following important measures will be taken in the food processing sector:

(i) Provision of activity specific infrastructure, such as, cold storage and transportation facilities, efficient processing facilities, trained manpower etc.;

(ii) establishment of linkages between farmers and processing units through contract farming;

(iii) rehabilitation and modernising flour milling units, rice hullers etc. by providing credit and other facilities etc.;

The small scale and village industries will be provided incentives and support to facilitate their growth and employment.

An Integrated Project on Management of Post Harvest Infrastructure on Horticulture Crops is implemented by the National Horticulture Board under which assistance is provided for grading/packing centre, retail outlets, transport vehicles, rigid plastic container, pre-cooling units, cold storage, mechanical grading/packing unit, improved packaging, quality testing equipment etc. A scheme for Post Harvest Technology for development of improved processing technology of oilseeds, pulses, maize and oil palm is also implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Cooperative sector will be reorganised and strengthened to provide better marketing and processing support to the farmers. In addition, a number of schemes are also implemented by the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment to improve agricultural marketing and connectivity of all villages by roads.

Soil conservation and productivity

1091. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that unless the ratio of Nitrogen Phosphate and Potash (NPK) is maintained at 4:2:1 ratio, soil quality will be eroded, adversely affecting soil conservation and productivity;

(b) whether it is a fact that the present ratio is 8:5/2:5/1;

(c) whether it is a fact that adequate controls do not exist to prevent the use of urea is excess of the requirement for short terms gains; and

(d) the steps Government are taking to maintain this balance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) Actual use of nutrients depends on many factors including the nutrients naturally available in the soil, consumption of nutrients by crops grown in the past and the requirement of crops intended to be sown. Hence, while a ratio of 4:2:1 for use of nitrogen, phosphorous and potash may be considered desirable as a general objective, it cannot be said that soil health and productivity would invariable be affected adversely if the ratio is not maintained.

(b) The NPK consumption ratio of 8.5:2/5:1/0 Obtained during the year 1995-96. The ratio was 10.0:2.9:1.0 in 1996-97.